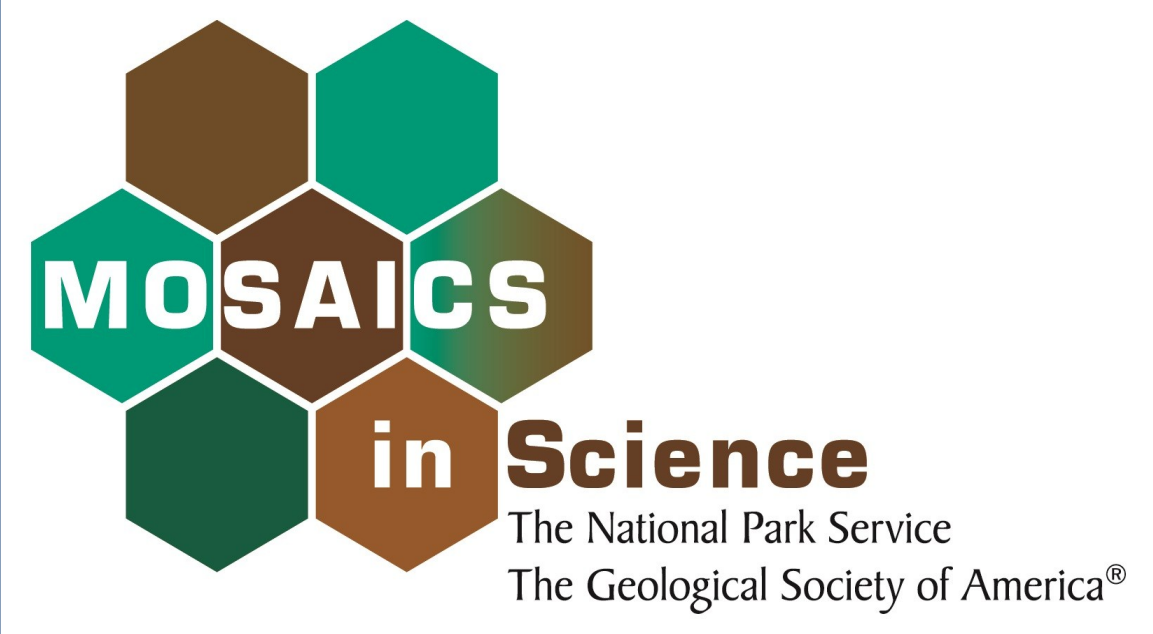


# Connecting Kids to the Biodiversity of Homestead National Monument of America



Angel Iverson  
*Mosaics in Science*

## Introduction

Environmental education is an important way to provide information to the public regarding natural resources, history, and ecosystems. Homestead National Monument of America uses many programs to teach hundreds of students annually the importance of biodiversity and history of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The Kids in Parks (KIP) programs are used over the summer with youth groups and the general public. KIP programs cover several topics including insects, birds, macroinvertebrates, mammals, and plants.

## Objectives

Lead hikes and educate children through day camps, public family programs, and special groups.

Develop curriculum based activities that introduce the participants to the diversity of the natural resources at the Monument.

Plan, present, and add five Kids in Parks programs to the curriculum guide.

- Birdie Basics
- Prairie Plant Prowl
- Insect Inspector
- Creek Critters
- Scats and Tracks



## Methods

Create awareness of the summer KIP programs with flyers, radio, and social media announcements.

Each KIP program includes three parts:

- 1) An introduction to the park and program topic
- 2) A hike or activity
- 3) A craft

The introduction includes an informational PowerPoint and/or book to engage students and some background information on the program topic.

A hike or activity allows students to get moving and expend some energy while applying information from the introduction to the field experience.

Crafts are a great way for students to remember their adventure at Homestead National Monument of America and helps them to share what they learned with family and friends.



## Results

KIP programs were added to the completed curriculum and placed in a portfolio. These programs are complete with introductory materials, background information, crafts, and activities.

## Discussion

There are several KIP programs available to fit the interest of the summer youth groups and general public. Each program teaches students the importance and niches different plants and animals of the prairie have. Students learn basic identification skills and get up-close with nature.

- **Birdie Basics** is all about the native birds and learning basic birdwatching skills.
- **Prairie Plant Prowl** allows student to understand the unique and complex tallgrass prairie system.
- **Insect Inspectors** gives students a chance to understand the importance and diversity of insects.
- **Creek Critters** is about macroinvertebrates and the importance of indicator species in the Cub Creek.
- **Scats and Tracks** program gives students the opportunity to be nature detectives and discover clues left by animals.

KIP works for a variety of audiences including public family events and school groups. The program is organized and offers flexibility for any challenges, such as inclement weather.

## Conclusion

KIP programs are a successful way to engage students with hands-on opportunities while learning about the tallgrass prairie ecosystems and history. Several youth groups and general public visit yearly, allowing students to connect with the biodiversity found at Homestead National Monument of America.



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